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(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Bhavan's Book University volumes had rare success. About a million and a quarter volumes have been sold in about eleven years. However, there is an insistent demand for the stray volumes which the Bhavan has issued from time to time at a lower price. In order to meet this demand, it has been decided to issue the new One-Rupee Book University Series side by side with the Book University Series.

I hope this new One-Rupee Series will have the same good fortune which the other Series had, of being useful to those who are interested in the fundamental values of Indian Culture, and of reaching out to a wider audience.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
Chowpatty Road, Bombay-7.
Vijaya Dashami
September 28, 1963

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

It may not be given to every one to leave behind when he quits the world footprints on the sands of time; but surely a study of the lives of great men will certainly serve to remind him that he too can make his life sublime. Among the formative influences on a man's life, by far the most important is *Satsanga,* association with *mahapurushas* who were great in their goodness, and good in their greatness. While their contemporaries have been fortunate in their personal contact with such personages, posterity has to content itself with reading what has been said of them and what they themselves have said.

Such *mahapurushas* have never been in short supply through the centuries in every part of the world. They are a Pageant of the Divine, the Procession of the True, the Good and the Beautiful. They came to comfort, to counsel, to warn and to guide in every human crisis in fulfilment, each in his time, in his way suited to each particular occasion of God's promise to incarnate to remedy the moral and spiritual imbalance whenever it occurs and disrupts the Order of the Cosmos.

Brief accounts of the lives of some of these immortal benefactors of mankind were serialised in the *Bhavan's Journal* and are now gathered together in this and its companion volumes. The

Pageant starts with Zarathustra, travels along many lands through long stretches of time and ends in this series with Sarojini Naidu.

The reader is invited to the company of this illustrious galaxy of the Great Personages of the world and to come into the rich heritage of noble thoughts and high endeavour that they symbolised in themselves.

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1

ZARATHUSTRA

Dr. C. Kunhan Raja

The religion of Zarathustra was founded in Iran about three thousand years ago.

Although it was founded in Iran, it spread far out into the world. But another religion practically swept away this great religion from its homeland towards the close of the first millennium of the Christian era.

At that time some people devoted to their religion fled from Iran and found an asylum in India; they set out from their homeland with their Fire in their hand and Faith in their God in their heart. They came to a very hospitable country. They are the Parsis.

In their own home, there are only a very few families remaining and they are recognised as an important minority in that country, Iran. One going to Iran can meet them and they call themselves Zaradoshtis, the followers of the religion of Zaradosht.

Throughout Iran we can see in city-corners and on hill-tops many ruined square buildings which they call Atesh-kade, i.e., place of fire. They are the temples where the followers of the religion of Zarathustra worshipped their Fire.

The religion of these Parsis was founded by a great Teacher by name Zarathustra who was born in Iran.

There are differences in the records relating to the exact place where he was born. We do not also know the time when Zoroaster was born.

Zoroaster mentions Vishtaspa with great admiration in his *Gathas*. Historians identify the King Vishtaspa of the *Gathas* with the father of Darius. There are others who believe that the Vishtaspa of the *Gathas* is a much earlier king, in so far as the father of Darius is too late a personality to be the contemporary of Zoroaster.

There are some Greek traditions which say that Zoroaster lived a few millennia earlier than the Christian era. But the generally accepted age of Zoroaster is about 1000 B.C.

All the Achaemenian emperors mention Ahura Mazda, the god of the Zoroastrian religion as having installed them on the throne, and Darius mentions this event of Ahura Mazda having placed him on the throne many a time, practically in all his inscriptions, and also as the Creator of the world and of man. The name of Zarathustra is not mentioned by them. But the figures carved on the walls in important places by the Achaemenian kings, like Persepolis and Susa show that they recognised him as the great Teacher.

In the *Gathas* it is specially mentioned that God sent Zarathustra as a Teacher to the world to protect the earth and humanity from evil.

There is a great similarity between the birth of Zarathustra and of Sri Krishna, as given in the *Gathas* and in the *Shrimadbhagavata* respectively. I need mention only the event as narrated in the *Gathas*. The event is described in the 29th Yasna, which is the second *Gatha*.

The Earth went to the great God Ahura Mazda in the form of a cow and complained to Him about her sorrows and asked Him why He created her, why He fashioned her. Passion and rapine outraged everywhere on the Earth and there was violence enmeshing the earth all-round. The Earth had no help outside of the great Lord. She implored Him to grant her some strong one to save her.

Ahura Mazda said that there was one man known to Him who had kept up all His commands, the Holy Zarathustra Spitama. He announced that Zarathustra was willing and eager to proclaim the eternal Laws of Ahura Mazda through songs and hymns and that for that reason He had granted to him the sweetness of voice.

On hearing this, the Earth in the form of the cow wailed, saying, "So I have to accept a feeble prop, the word of one who has no physical strength. It is a mighty prince that I want. Will such a one ever arise as I dream, one who shall protect me with his mighty arms?"

Then she reconciled herself to the position and prayed that Ahura Mazda bestow His Grace on them who were to protect the Law of Ahura Mazda, that He might grant them the vital force, that the Leader of man might guide men to the condition of peace and rest. She promised to accept Zarathustra as the guide and Lord. She promised to serve with zeal both Ahura Mazda and His Messenger.

This is a free rendering of the substance of the *Gatha* in which the occasion for the advent of Zarathustra is described. There are some words like

Asha and Vohu Mano, which will be explained presently. This episode has a close resemblance to the episode of the occasion for the advent of Sri Rama and of Sri Krishna in the Indian mythologies, which no one can miss. The only difference is that while Zarathustra and Jesus and Buddha are men, Sri Krishna and Sri Rama are Gods themselves incarnate as men; they are Gods giving instruction to humanity in person and not men passing on God's instruction to humanity.

Like Sri Rama and Sri Krishna and also like Buddha, Zarathustra had also royal connections. Sri Rama was heir to the throne and sat on the throne; Buddha was heir to the throne but left off his palace and his family before his father died. Sri Krishna killed a tyrant who had usurped the throne and he placed the rightful heir on the throne; he himself lived in royal style though he was not a ruler of any kingdom. Zarathustra was also known as Spitama, and it is supposed that Spitama was an ancestor of Zarathustra who was such a great person that the descendants took that as the family name.

There is one doubt about the meaning of the name Zarathustra and Spitama. Etymologically Zarathustra means "one having an aged camel". The Sanskrit equivalent will be *jaaradushtra*. There are many words both in the *Avesta* and in the Vedas that have the name of an animal at the end, like *Krisasva* which means "one having a slim horse", and the Avestan equivalent is Karesaspa.

In the *Avesta* itself there are the names of others having the names of animals like Bull and Horse at the end, and even of Ushtra (Camel).

But some people like the late Taraporewala hold that the name Zarathustra is not an original name, that it was applied to him after he was accepted as the Great Teacher and that it is very inappropriate to assign such a name to a Great Teacher. They derive the word from Harit in Sanskrit meaning "golden" and Ushtra from the root *Vas* in Sanskrit meaning "shining". There is another name in the *Avesta* where the ending is Ustra and that is Ferashaostra.

The meaning of the word Spitama is also not clear. Spitama was an ancestor of Zarathustra remote by nearly ten generations from Zarathustra. The late Taraporewala tries to relate it to the Sanskrit word Sveta meaning "white" and considers it as a superlative. I have my own feeling that the word should be related to Spenta, which is associated with Amesha (Sanskrit *Amrita,* immortal). The Amesha Spentas are six Divinities in the religion of Zoroaster. I cannot however enter into these philological considerations in this article.

Just as Buddha speaks about earlier Buddhas and the Laws of conduct established by the Aryas, Zarathustra also speaks of the earlier leaders of humanity like Saoshyantas and Angras (Sanskrit Angiras and Greek Angello, English Angel). There are also the Athruvas, the Atharvanas of the Vedas. They were all the wise people, the worshippers of the great God, the carriers of the Law.

Certainly there must have been decadence among the followers of the religion. God's Law was being violated and evil was getting dominant in the world. It is to restore the Law of God that Ahura Mazda selected Zarathustra as his messenger carrying to humanity the Law of Ahura Mazda. He was the best of men, the only man who had obeyed all the commands and Laws of Ahura Mazda.

Very little information is available about him in the portion of the Sacred Literature that has come down to us in what is called the *Avesta*. There are some occasional references to his parents and his relatives and to his place of birth and about other details. For Jesus Christ we have the *Gospels;* for Buddha we have the *Tripitakas*. For Sri Krishna and for Sri Rama we have exhaustive accounts: the *Bhagavata* and *Harivamsa* and *Vishnu Purana* for Sri Krishna and the *Ramayana* for Sri Rama, besides various Puranas and allied literature. Thanks to Alexander and his successors, much of this great literature relating to the Holy Prophet of Iran was lost.

The Spitama family must have been a noble one and there is mention of Haechadaspa as also a Spitama. He must have been one of the relatives of Zarathustra. Zarathustra's father was Pourushaspa. Pouruchishta was his daughter and she is mentioned as Haechadaspana Spitami, which means a lady belonging to the Spitama family in the line of Haechadaspa. Zarathustra must have been his own name, which name the Greeks preserved as Zarastrades, or Zoroastres; this was again corrupted into Zoroaster by the Romans. This is the name by which he is now known in the European languages while in Persian itself the name came down as Zaradosht. The Zoroastrians in Iran are known now as Zaradoshtis.

Zarathustra might have been born in Bactria, known in the *Avesta* as Barekhdha and Bakhdhi. Vishtaspa mentioned by Zarathustra in the *Gathas*, presumably as the name of the reigning king, cannot be the Vishtaspa, father of Darius. But there are some people who identify them. Darius gives the list of his ancestors and there are evidences in the *Avesta* on which the genealogy of Vishtaspa mentioned in the *Gathas* could be reconstructed. Ferdousi also mentions the Vishtaspa of the *Avesta*. The two lists are quite different from each other. There is no reason to believe that Zarathustra was a contemporary of the father of Darius of the sixth century B.C. He must be much earlier. We do not know how ancient Zarathustra was. All that we can say is that Zarathustra and the *Avesta* have a very high antiquity.

Modern scholars attempt to differentiate between the real historical man named Zarathustra who reformed the religion of Iran and the prophet around whom many anecdotes and many miracles have gathered and who thus became a mythological character. This is a doctrine which modern scholars restrict to matters within the Hindu and the Zoroastrian religions. I have not seen any serious work done by a recognised author who has drawn a distinction between the Historical Jesus and the Jesus of the *Gospels* with various miracles associated with him. What is found in the *Tripitaka* about Buddha Siddhartha is accepted as facts relating to the Teacher. No one would dare to raise such points relative to the Prophet of Arabia. As for

Hinduism, even the historicity of Sri Krishna and Sri Rama is questioned! The divine nature of Sri Rama, according to scholars, is a later concoction of priests patronised by kings. There are different Sri Krishnas according to scholars.

Zoroaster was far above the other persons on the earth at that time in point of certain qualities, and such qualities made him really superhuman and a worthy vehicle for the Almighty God Ahura Mazda to spread the teachings about His Law among men. His qualities were known to God, and God selected him for the great task. There were various temptations which he was able to resist. Demons attempted to kill him but he vanquished them. The miracles and superhuman qualities relating to Zarathustra have not been preserved through contemporary records in the same way as we have the records of other Teachers like Jesus Christ contained in the *Gospels*. No teacher of the world has had such biographers as Valmiki for Sri Rama and Veda Vyasa for Sri Krishna. It is not that Zarathustra did not have contemporaries who realised and recorded his glories. But we have to thank only Alexander and his followers for the loss of such records.

The great quality of Zarathustra's teaching lay in the fact that his was not an aggressive religion. There was the Vedic religion on the east; neither the Zoroastrian traditions nor the Vedic traditions preserve any record of a war between the followers of the religion of Zoroaster in Iran and the followers of the Vedic Path on the eastern border. Buddhism came later and spread along the area where the Vedic Religion also was current and came to the borders of the region of the religion of Zoroaster. There are archaeological remains to show that on the border areas of India and Iran both the religion of Zoroaster and the religion of Buddha lived side by side along with the religion of the Vedas.

The original *Avesta* of Zarathustra with the Pahlavi commentaries form the basic text of the religion of Zoroaster as it is now current.

The *Avesta,* the original text of Zoroaster, as it is now available, consists of a few distinct parts. What we have now is only a small part of what they had in the earlier days. There is a tradition found in the Greek literature, as recorded by Pliny on the authority of Hermippos, that Zoroaster had actually composed two million verses. There is an Arab tradition preserved by Anu Jaffir Attavari that the writings of Zarathustra covered twelve hundred parchments.

Considering the extent of the available Vedic literature, which is only a small part of what actually existed, there is nothing improbable in the Zoroastrian literature too being of such considerable length. The Greek historians themselves attest the atrocity committed by Alexander during his invasion of Iran. The original texts, according to the tradition, must have been in twenty-one books. Much about the personal history of Zarathustra has been lost through the destruction of these books called Nasks.

The nineteenth Nask is preserved in full and that is now called the Vendidad. The word is really Vi-daevadad, or the Laws (Dad) against (Vi) the demons (Daeva). Another large section of the

Avesta is the *Yasnas*. The *Gathas* form a part of the *Yasnas*, scattered between the 28th (which is the first) and the 53rd *Yasnas*. There are *Yasnas* that are not *Gathas* coming within this group of *Gathas*. There are five groups of *Gathas* differing in metre, each group having a separate metre. They are prayers with philosophical and abstract thoughts contained in the poetry.

Here I must say that Zarathustra is one of the few Teachers who was also a great poet; all the Vedic teachers from the beginning have been poets. The Yasna consists of 72 sections. The text falls into three divisions, one from beginning to the 27th, where the *Gathas* start in the 28th. Then there is the portion between 28th and 53rd where the *Gathas* appear and then the portions after the *Gathas*. The divisions are more or less equal. The Yasnas are used at the worship (Yasna, Sanskrit *Yajna*). The Visperad (*Visve Ritavah* in Sanskrit) are supplementary to the Yasnas. The *Yashts* (*Yajatis* in Sanskrit) consists of twenty-one hymns or rather adorations of the Yazatas (Sanskrit *Yajatas*), the adorables i.e. the Divines. Along with the Vendidad which are codes of Law more or less, these three texts form the chief portion in the *Avesta*. The *Yasnas* and the Visperad are not mentioned in the Dinkard, the Pahlavi text where there is a description of the contents of the ancient Nasks that are now practically lost to us.

In the *Gathas* we find the noblest and the sublimest specimens of poetry and in the *Yashts*, not completely in metre, we find some of the best specimens of literary art.

The texts are closely related to the Vedas. So is the religion. There are many parallels between the two. The Haoma-yasna of the *Avesta* is the Soma-yajna (*Soma-yaga*) of the Vedas. Ahura is the *Asura*, (an appellation of the highest gods in the Veda). Mitra of the Avesta is the Mitra of the Veda. Some gods in the Veda have become evil spirits in the *Avesta;* this is the case with Indra and Nasatya. Apam Napat, a deity in the Veda remains as such in the *Avesta*. The river Sarasvati (the river basin, really) of the Veda becomes Haraquiti, a region created by Ahura Mazda in the *Avesta*. The Sapta Sindhu, the seven streams of celestial bliss in the Veda, becomes another region created by Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda created sixteen regions where the God's Law prevailed; that is how the text of the Vendidad starts. His enemy Angra Mainyu created sixteen corresponding regions of evil and suffering. The Vendidad is the text where are given the Laws to keep away the demons and their laws.

The religion founded by Zarathustra is a noble religion full of ethical grandeur. Ahura Mazda is the supreme god. He has six Divines around him, being known as the Amesha Spentas. Amesha is the equivalent of the Sanskrit Amrita. Spentas are the Holy Ones. Three of them are male and three are female. The male divinities are the Asha (Sanskrit *Rita*) the Vohu Mano (Sanskrit *Vasu Manas*) and Khashatra (Sanskrit *Kshatra*). Asha is usually mentioned as Asha Vahishtha and Khashatra is mentioned generally as Khashatra Vairya. Vahishtha means the greatest (Sanskrit *Vasishtha* and Modern Persian Behesht). Vairya in Sanskrit is *Virya*. Aramatti (Sanskrit *Aramati*), Haurvatat

(Sanskrit *Sarvatati*) and Ameratat (Sanskrit *Amaratati*) are three female divinities. As the enemy of Ahura Mazda there is Angra Mainyu with six evil spirits around him; they are Aka Manah, Indra, Saurva, Taromaiti, Tautu and Zairica. The triumph of the light against the darkness is the central doctrine of the religion of Zarathustra. That is why it is such an ethical religion. The religion preached by him had a glorious life of over a millennium and a half. The religion was practically crushed in the land of its birth; but the religion triumphed in the world, and the ethical doctrine of the triumph of the good over the evil was established.

There are various points of similarity between Zarathustra and Sri Krishna. I have already mentioned that both had royal blood in them. Both were born in a city on the bank of a river. There were miraculous events on their birth. Both had life in forest in the early days. Both had to fight against the demons and both triumphed. The circumstances of their advent are also identical. Their achievements too are of the same degree.

One of my greatest privileges in my life as a student, one thing of which I am really proud, is that along with my studies of the Sanskrit literature, especially the Vedas, I had the fortune to study the *Avesta* and the old Persian inscriptions by emperors who were the early followers of the religion established by Zarathustra.

Attempts have been made by some scholars to show that there has been a severe conflict between the religion of Zarathustra and the religion of the Vedas. It is said that Zarathustra not merely reformed the religion of his time, but also changed the whole of the Vedic beliefs and Vedic practices found in his time. This is the same story as the story of Buddha being an enemy of the Vedic ways. I have nothing but admiration for modern scholarship so far as history and grammar are concerned; but I have my own views about the value of modern interpretations of ancient texts from the cultural point of view.

There are differences, but there are such differences between the Vedic religion and the later religion of India. Daeva, Sanskrit Deva, became the term for the evil spirits in the *Avesta,* and Asura, the name of the great god, became the name of the demons in Sanskrit of a later day! But these are only changes in the meanings of words and not in facts. There is nothing to show that a single one of the gods of the Veda was declared to be a demon by Zarathustra. All his six Amesha Spentas (the Holy Immortals) are divinities in a Vedic god. Indra is the name of a demon in the Zarathustrian tradition, but Vritraghna remained a god, and Indra of the Vedas is the Vritraghna. And such changes in meanings are very few. The retention of the nature of the gods found in the Veda, even in the Avesta is far more prominent than such a change in meaning.

Zarathustra never condemned the religion on the eastern side of his country and never asked the king or his followers to go with sword and fist against their neighbours. He had no need to reform the religion on the eastern side, since the religion there represented the Law of God. The enemies of the Vedic people whom Indra exterminated are not certainly the gods found in the religion of Zarathustra.

There must be a new approach to the study of Zarathustra and his teachings in India to reach the true position regarding the relation of the Vedas and the Avesta on the cultural side.

Ashem Vohu Vahishtem Asti Ushta Asti.

"Righteousness is the highest Good, is the Illumination."

2

SOCRATES

Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao

The first great philosopher of the western world in the pre-Christian era is Socrates. His name is a byword for wisdom and humility in the history of western civilization.

Socrates had an ugly face, a flat nose, and prominent eyes, thick lips, eyes set wide apart; he was like a satyr. He was stalking like a pelican rolling his eyes. It was not the outward personality of Socrates that attracts us, it is his faith in Truth and the right cause, his superhuman passion to stick to values that have entitled him to undying fame.

Born about 470 B.C. as the son of a sculptor, he was a citizen of Athens. For some time he followed the same calling, but having other ambitions, joined the army and was present at the battle of Potidaea and also at the battle of Delium. In the first he saved the life of Alcibiades and in the second, that of Xenophon. Returning to Athens, he devoted himself to study and began to exhort people on public questions and the conduct of life.

In 406 B.C. he was made a member of the Senate of Five Hundred, and had other honours accorded to him and he continued his teaching alternately with his public duties.

The Athenians of his time were also treated to a discussion of philosophy by a school of teachers called the Sophists. The Sophists took money from the rich and taught their children the art of argumentation and speech-making. They traded in learning and dished out information for sale. They made the good look like evil and painted the evil as good. They were clever men who did not have any ideal before them.

The great names among the Sophists were Protagoras, Prodicus, Gorgias and Hippias. Socrates set himself the task of attacking these false teachers of Greece. Clever and smart rather than earnest and truthful, they confused men by their epigrams, paradoxes, quibblings and verbal feats. The effect of the Sophists' teaching was to undermine the belief of men in truth and morality. It spelt the decay of all the values.

The Sophists held that "truth is subjective." "Man is the measure of all things." There is no one truth or morality that is to be respected by all. What is moral for one is immoral for another.

The mission of Socrates was to establish the objectivity of *truth* and *morality,* in the teeth of the Sophist opposition. He also equated virtue with knowledge. He believed that "all virtue is one". Virtue is the knowledge of the good. Virtue can be taught. Knowledge has the power of making us good. Ignorance is vice. We can conquer ignorance by knowledge. He laid a great deal of stress on definition. A good logical definition makes things clear to us.

The story of the life of Socrates has to be gathered from three sources: (1) Plato, i.e., his disciple: *Socratic Dialogues,* i.e., *Crito, Phaedo* and the *Apology;* (2) the Comedian Aristophane's drama *The Cloud*, and (3) Xenophon's *Memora-*

bilia. Socrates himself did not write anything. Of all these accounts, we get the best picture of the man and his great teachings from his celebrated disciple Plato's memorable *Dialogues*.

An account of the life of Socrates is interesting. He was the son of a working sculptor and a midwife. He was poor and never was after money. A comic poet wrote, "I hate Socrates who has thought everything out, but ignored the problem of how to provide himself and his family with food." He wanted to live the life of a thinker and he had utter disregard for the temporal values of life, wealth, fame, power and position. He married late in life one Xanthippe. Popular legends represent her as the incarnation of shrewishness. It is reported that Xanthippe once was so irritated by the indifference of Socrates to his family that she railed against him and showered abuses on him. Socrates stood firm like a stone. The irate Xanthippe was so upset at the callous calmness of her husband that she was determined to provoke him. So, she poured a pot of dung-water on him. After the 'refreshing' bath, Socrates exclaimed, "After thunder comes rain!"

But in the *Dialogues* of Plato there is nothing to suggest all this. Xanthippe "is no worse than a woman with no control over her emotions and no power of entering into her husband's mind."

Socrates had not only mental courage but also was physically very bold. Till the age of forty-seven, he was interested in physical and natural sciences. Later he interested himself in the study of human problems. He says, "As a young man, I had amazing passion for the branch of knowledge known as natural sciences—to know the cause of things, why they come into being, why they are destroyed, why they exist." He says he ran the risk of losing the "eye of the soul". "I am afraid my soul might become altogether blind if I looked at things with my eyes or tried to grasp them through the medium of the senses..." Other methods were needed to seek the Truth of what is (*Phaedo* f96).

Hence, Socrates took to the study of the nature of man's soul and the right destiny he should seek. He believed that we should examine the views presented to us and sift the facts and then accept the kernel of "truth in it". He believed in the power of reason as the solvent of our troubles. Hence he went about Athens persuading all to give their first and foremost care to the perfection of their souls and not, till they had done that, to think of wealth, power, body, etc. *Virtue does not come from them* and every good thing that men have whether in public or in private, comes from virtue.

Socrates had neither a library nor a school, and the place to find him was in the market or the gymnasium.

Socrates did not allow any Athenian with whom he came in contact to remain undisturbed: he would question him about the way others lived and the views about things others entertained. He exposed to ridicule, without rancour, those who gave themselves the air of knowledge, without really having it.

Socrates had an ardent love of truth. He hated cant and hypocrisy. He held the view that "philosophy is the noblest of all studies, the study of what man should be, and what he should pursue".

Socrates had a favourite method of tackling his opponents. It is called the method of dialectics. He would ask his opponent, first of all, to define the term he uses. The opponent very often cited an instance, instead of a definition. Socrates proceeded to pick holes in the definition. The game went on for some time and towards the end, the opponent was led to accept a position which he rejected when he began the argument. This irritated many who held discussions with him.

The Delphic Oracle once declared that none was wiser than Socrates. He tried his best to prove the Oracle was wrong. So he sought the poets, politicians, priests, craftsmen, who held that they were wise. He questioned them, and none could give a clear account of what they talked about. In the end he understood what the Oracle meant: he is wise who knows his ignorance!

Socrates was wise, for he knew that he was ignorant. Others seem to be wise when they are not. The nature of the Socratic method is very effective in bringing home to us the truth. He was not shocked by the strange views men held about things and he was fearlessly frank in his discussions with others. His advice to men has been most beautifully summarised to us by Sir Richard Livingstone, the authority on Greek Studies: Think well, think hard, and think much and closely. Search for the truth. Be confident you will find it. Be intellectually humble, hold convictions firmly, but not arrogantly and, welcome criticism. Be self-critical always. An unexamined life is not worthy of man's acceptance. Man is a rational animal. Reason is the divine in man. Men can know the truth if they search for it. Truth has the compelling power of imparting right conduct. Knowledge is the greatest asset of man.

Socrates believed in the dialogue method. The true approach to knowledge is not through books and lectures, but through conversation, discussion, question and answer, two or more persons thrashing a subject till the chaff is winnowed from the wheat.

Socrates played the role of an intellectual midwife in the delivery of thought. He tested every opinion, detected the fallacies and then revealed the truth.

This was an occupation very unpopular with the world. There is no greater mistake we can make than believe that the ordinary man desires most of all to know the truth. He, on the other hand, desires to be told what fits in with his prejudices and what completes or harmonises with his picture of the world and life.

Socrates believed that it was his mission in life to set men thinking about the good and the true. He believed in the objectivity of values. He was not a mere thinking shop or a cloudgazer. He combined his intellectual powers with his moral genius. His interest in knowledge was directed to achieving ethical perfection.

Knowledge does not merely subserve action but governs it. For Socrates it is not enough that men should do what is right, but also must know why they do it. Morality is not an unmethodical, unconscious process. To know what is right and still do the wrong is difficult if not impossible. All moral excellence is at bottom wisdom. Once ignorance is destroyed, the compelling power of knowledge cannot but draw the individual to the right action. Wrong doing is involuntary for the uncultivated. All the different individual virtues flow from one centre, namely wisdom. By wisdom Socrates meant not mere information. He meant what the *Gita* describes as *Jnana*. "There is nothing here that purifies like knowledge." (*Nahi jnanena sadrsam pavitram iha vidyate*)—IV 38.

Socrates declares in the *Phaedo* that there is only one currency in which all things can be exchanged and that is wisdom. Socrates applied his mind to the correct definitions of not only great subjects but ordinary topics also. He severely examined men and leaders of Athens who bandied about words like justice, good, liberty, etc., and condemned their ignorance. He struggled to dissipate vague and foggy thought to clear the mind, to penetrate to first principles and to rule thought and conduct by them.

Many of the Sophists and some leaders of the governing party were dissatisfied and got infuriated with Socrates. They wanted to get rid of him. So at the age of seventy, Socrates was brought to trial by three men, Meletus (a minor poet), Lycon (an orator of the day) and Anytus (one of the chief democratic leaders) on charges of not believing in gods in whom the State believed and also of introducing other strange divinities and corrupting the young. We have the picture of the trial, one of the most famous in the history of the western world, from the pen of Plato, the devout disciple of Socrates, in the celebrated dialogue, *Apology*.

The jury were over five hundred. The three prosecutors presented their case undefended, for in those days in Athens nobody could be represented by a counsel though his speech might be composed for him by a professional speech-writer.

The speech of Socrates at the trial is the finest we have from a philosopher in a law court. He pleads that he is not well-versed in the art of legal presentation but still hopes to convince the jury with arguments and never resorts to a plea for mercy by invoking self-pity or by bringing his weeping children before the judges. He sticks to the rightness of his cause. He speaks of his mission and chooses to obey his inner voice. He says that his mission is God's order and he would risk it, even if he should fall foul of the State.

The verdict of death sentence was passed on him by a majority of sixty. Under the Athenian law the defendant in a court had the right to make a counter-proposal which the jury would accept as substitute for their judgment. Socrates would not compromise. He suggested that for his services to the State, he should be honoured in the city hall at public expense. This irritated the jury and there were 110 votes more in favour of the death penalty.

Socrates defends his position and declares to the court: "If you say to me, 'Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and you shall be let off, but upon one condition, that you are not hereafter to inquire and speculate in this way any more and that if you are caught doing so again, you shall die:'—if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I have the warmest affection for you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength, I shall never cease from my practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet and saying to him to seek virtue. . . .I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times."

Socrates is unafraid and he analyses the death state to which the jury have condemned him. He says Death should not be feared. It is one of two things: it is either a state of utter unconsciousness or leads to life in another world. If it is a dreamless sleep, it is enjoyable. If death implies life in another world, Socrates says that he can talk there undisturbed with Orpheus, Musaerus, Hesiod and Homer and they certainly do not put a man to death for asking questions. There can be no greater delight than in conversing with them and asking them questions. Socrates asks of the court only one favour. He says, "When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, my friends, to punish them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about 'virtue'; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing—then reprove them, as I have reproved you."

Socrates leaves the court with words that have remained forever great. He says, "The hour of departure has arrived and we go our ways; I to die, you to live, which is better God only knows." Yes, God knows and so too does mankind.

The speeches of Socrates in the court gives us the measure of the man. "The whole of the *Apology* is the property of Socrates. The greatness of the soul of Socrates gives colour to this marvellous creation. There is the fusion of sober sense and fervid enthusiasm, the disdain of all externals, the faith in the victorious might of reasoned thought, the firm conviction that the good man is proof against all the strokes of fortune, the cheerful confidence with which a great man goes his way and suffers neither fears nor hopes to divert him from the fulfilment of his task." The *Apology* is a lay breviary of strong and free spirits. It is a virile book.

Socrates, the sage, was carried to the prison. Normally, the execution of Socrates would have followed immediately after the sentence, but it was postponed till the sacred ship sent to Delos for the festival of Apollo had returned. Till its return, no public execution could take place. Hence the delay. On the eve of the execution day, some of Socrates' friends offered him an easy opportunity to escape from prison with different arguments. Socrates answered them all, one after another, and did not agree to escape. He told his friends not to bring his wife and children to the prison for that will create a scene before all. He drank the cup of hemlock quietly and walked a little to make the drug work. He died after some time.

He was the first intellectual martyr of the western world. Of him we cannot get a better description than the testimony of his disciple Plato, "Of all the men of his time whom I have known, he was the wisest, the best and the most just, I know."

Socrates, the sage, with his acute mind and playful humour, hid under the simplicity of his manner, the soul of a hero and the virtues of a saint. In the history of philosophy, Socrates is famous for his inductive reasoning and the fixing up of general concepts. He brought philosophy from the heavens to the market-place. He was noted for his sobriety. Socrates maintained the right attitude to life under the most trying moments till the end. He was considerate to others, courageous, composed and proud, and as Russell puts it, in an unself-conscious way, fought shy of excessive display of emotions all his life. John Stuart Mill declared: "Socrates is a man unique in history, of a kind at all times needed.... The world cannot too often remember that Socrates had existed."

Socrates, according to modern research in Greek philosophy, represents the cause of individual freedom and vigour and manifold diversity. Livingstone observes, "No method has ever been discovered as that which Socrates devised and no age has ever needed that method more than our own age. But he has not been reincarnated in our generation and one of its tragedies is that when it needed a Socrates it got a Shaw."

To us in India, the chief lesson of Socrates is his insistence on the knowledge of the Self. The Socrates' exhortation to 'know the self' does not mean simply to be conscious under all circumstances of what one is or is not. It meant entering deep into one's own soul, beyond the particular and fleeting, to find the one identical, permanent substratum. It meant finding that secret nature we carry about everywhere with us, and which contains within itself the conditions of our wisdom and happiness. It is a true and authentic echo of the Upanishads- -*atmanam viddhi*.

3

THE BUDDHA

Dr. P. Narasimhayya

The sixth century B.C. to which the Buddha belongs was a period of great events and great teachers in many countries, from China to Greece.

It was the period of Confucius and Lao-Tzu in China, of Mahavira Jina and Buddha in India, of the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah II among the Jews, of Nebuchadnezzar, the ambitious king of Babylon, of Cyrus, the great and tolerant king of Persia, of Thales, the father of Greek philosophy, and Pythagoras, the Greek religious reformer and mystic philosopher.

In North India at this time, several kingdoms and republics flourished. The prominent kingdoms were Gandhara in the north-west (with its capital at Takshasila or Taxila as the Greeks called it), Kosala, Magadha, Mathura and Varanasi (Banaras).

The republics were those of the Mallas, Videhas, Licchavis, Vajjis, and Matsyas.

Sometimes the republics entered into a union or confederacy like the Vajjian Confederacy.

Important centres of learning had grown up in Takshasila, Varanasi and other cities. Panini, the Sanskrit grammarian, Dhanvantari and Susruta, the masters of Indian medicine, lived at the University of Takshasila. Buddha's doctor Jivaka studied medicine and surgery in this University for seven years.

The Vedas with their hymns (*Rik*), rules of worship (*Brahmanas*) and philosophical teachings (*Upanishads*), the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* with their moral teachings of *dharma* and other classical works had spread for several centuries a general culture among all sections and tribes of the Indian people.

Buddha was born* in 563 B.C. (or 567 B.C.), a prince of the kingdom of Kapilavastu (in modern Nepal) at the foot of the Himalayas. His father was King Suddhodana, and his mother Queen Maya. He belonged to the Gautama clan of the Sakya tribe. His original name given at his birth was Siddhartha, meaning "he who has realized his goal".

He was born in the garden of Lumbini as his mother was on her way from Kapilavastu to her father's house at Devadaha, and she passed away soon after delivery. (A stone pillar erected about four hundred years later by Asoka marks this place of Buddha's birth.)

Buddha grew up under the care of his loving father, surrounded by the luxuries of the palace. He received the usual training of an Indian prince in military exercises and the secular and religious teachings of the time. He married his cousin Yasodhara and had a son Rahula.

Though he was very happy in his life, he felt keenly the sorrows and sufferings, the decay, decline and death which beset life. It is said that one

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*** An inspiring account of Buddha's life is given in Sir Edwin Arnold's poem *The Light of Asia.***

day while he was riding through the city, he saw three very sad sights, one after another—an old man bent down with age, haggard, doddering and struggling to walk with the support of a stick; then a sick man, thin, pale and shivering with a raging fever; and then the funeral bier of a dead man. Prince Siddhartha was deeply moved by these sights and brooded over the reason why life should have so much suffering and end at last in nothing.

He next saw, going along the road, an ascetic sannyasi whose life was devoted to the search for their hidden reason or Truth.

Prince Siddhartha returned to the palace and resolved to renounce every interest and pleasure, and carry on his inquiry. He resolved to go out and meet the best teachers of the time and get enlightenment on this greatest of human problems.

On the night of this Great Renunciation, the Buddhist texts say, "a lamp of scented oil was burning. On the bed strewn with jasmine and other flowers, the mother of Rahula was sleeping, with her hand on her son's head. The Bodhisattva standing with his foot on the threshold, looked and thought, 'If I move aside the queen's hand and take my son, the queen will awake and that will be an obstacle in my path. When I have become a Buddha, I will come back and see him.' And he descended from the palace."

He was twenty-nine years old, and he met the prominent teachers of the time, Alara Kalama, Uddaka and others, and from them learnt philosophical truths and doctrines, yoga-disciplines and modes of meditation. He next went with five faithful disciples to a solitary spot in the jungles of Uruvela, and for six years engaged in severe ascetic practices and prolonged meditations. He came near to death, with complete exhaustion of body and mind, but found no wisdom, no solution to his problems.

At this stage, he felt that a strong and healthy body and mind, well-tuned by right feeling and discipline, would be a better means or instrument for intuiting and discovering the secrets of Life, of Nature and of Man. So he turned to this less ascetic "middle way" of discipline, and his ascetic friends left him at this stage.

But Siddhartha continued his quest, resolved to find a solution. He followed this path for six years. Many doubts and temptations came into his mind to give up his hard quest and turn back to a life of ease and pleasure. These are represented in Buddhist works as the temptations of *Mara*. But his mind and will were set on his quest.

On the last occasion, when he sat under the banyan tree, it is said, he carried on his inquiry and reflection steadily, almost continuously, for nearly seven weeks. A new light dawned on his mind, and he saw the answer to his problems. He had reached Enlightenment—Bodhi, the state of Buddha. Several times he reviewed this experience for clarification.

The Buddha then wished to share his Enlightenment and the Truth with the world. He went to Varanasi, where his old ascetic friends gathered round him. At Saranath, near Varanasi, in the Deer Park, Buddha gave his first sermon, and thus, as the Buddhist scriptures say, "set in motion the Wheel of Dharma". (At this spot, a *stupa* or domelike structure was built in later years and has been known as the Dhamekh Stupa.)

Buddha lived here in a monastery which soon grew up at a short distance to the north of this spot. (A marble pillar with a headpiece of three sculptured lions was erected here by Asoka, and is still partly preserved. This headpiece has become the national emblem of India.)

He devoted the next forty years of his life, living as a monk among other monks, to the work of spiritual guidance and teaching. He visited and resided in many places in Bihar—Rajagriha, Vaisali and others. The king of Magadha (Bihar), Ajatasatru, was deeply devoted to him. His followers increased in number and many monastic centres grew up. Ananda, his favourite disciple and cousin, always attended on him with loving care and often took the liberty of asking him for clearer and simpler answers. His other well-known direct disciples were Kasyapa, Sariputta, Moggallana and the nun Gautami. The king of Mathura, Avantiputra, was also an ardent disciple.

Buddha also took into his spiritual fold, his father, his step-mother, wife and son. At his father's wish, he returned to Kapilavastu, and taught them the Way of Dhamma as his loving gift to them. When the Buddha met the princess, his wife, she knelt and embraced his feet. He comforted her and told her that the way he had discovered was equally important for her.

She was of the same age as the Buddha and during the next thirty-five years of her life, she was a revered member of the Buddha Sangha. She passed away two years before Buddha. On the day of her passing, she prostrated herself before him in paying her last homage, and that night in deep meditation passed on to the heights of Nirvana.

At Kapilavastu, he stayed in the Nyagrodha grove outside the palace and gave his teaching and counsel to all his people.

During his long ministration of forty years, wherever the Master had gone, people turned to him for his counsel, teaching and spiritual solace, —a young woman who had lost her child, a depressed courtesan Amara, the lady Visakha of Vaisali who was ill-treated in the house of her father-in-law, the treasurer Migara, and others. When the aged parents of Yasas, a young man of Varanasi, were unhappy at his decision to leave his home and become a monk and religious missionary, Buddha advised him to stay at home and look after his parents. To his disciples, Buddha loved to narrate his hard early struggles towards Enlightenment. (These accounts are found in the Birth or Jataka stories of the Buddhist scripture).

His last illness was caused by a meat dish offered to him by a huntsman, but the Master warned the disciples against blaming him. As he grew worse, he lay down in a grove between two tall and shady Sal trees. He spent his last hours in giving directions and advice to the monks. Subhadra, the wandering ascetic, visited him to become his last direct disciple. The Master then asked his disciples to state their doubts and difficulties that he might remove them. They kept silent.

Then the Blessed One addressed his brethren: "And now, brethren, I take my leave of you. All the constituents of being are transitory. Work out your salvation with diligence." (*Mahaparinirvana Sutta, VI*. 1). He entered into deep meditation and passed into the state of Mahaparinirvana.

It is a remarkable coincidence that the three primary events of his life—his birth, enlightenment and passing—all occurred on the same day of the year.

Buddha the Enlightened has been known also as the Sakya Muni, the sage of the Sakya clan; and as Tathagata, he who has arrived at the Truth.

His teachings were handed down orally through teachers and pupils, collected and chosen by three councils, and written about four centuries later in Ceylon.

A short time after the passing of the Master, a Council of the Elders (*Theras*) was held under Kasyapa. Several disciples recited the Master's teachings on the Doctrine (*Abhidhamma*), the rules of the Sangha (*Vinaya*), and the accounts of his birth and early struggles towards Buddha-hood (*Sutta*). These were arranged in three sections (or "baskets", *Pitakas*). Two more councils were held, each after an interval of about a century, at Vaisali (383 B.C.) and at Pataliputra (241 B.C.). About 160 years later (*c*. 80 B.C.) King Vattagamani of Ceylon ordered and helped the writing of the three-fold scripture, the *Tripitaka*.

Many additions to the doctrines were made in later centuries in order to develop or explain the Master's teachings. It is therefore difficult to mark out exactly the *original* teachings and words of the Buddha. Nevertheless, his essential teachings and the spirit of his message are quite clear.

Buddha wanted to teach primarily, not a philosophy (or *darsana*) but Ethic (*Dhamma*), the practical way (*Yana*) or means to the good life, the path to the improvement of the lot of man. When Ananda asked the Master which among his teachings was the highest, he answered "Dhamma." Asked what was the second highest, he answered again, "Dhamma."

Like a scientist reporting facts as they are found in our experience, Buddha describes the facts of life, consciousness and the things of the universe. He states as the first great truth or Arya Satya, that life is full of suffering (*dukkha*). He paints a deeply moving and gloomy picture of life, but he sees also the way to a better life. He is neither a hopeless pessimist nor a superficial optimist.

The second great or "noble" truth, Arya Satya, which he points out, is universal change (*anitta* or *kshanika*). Slowly or quickly, according to their nature, all things change. This universal change is called *samsara*, the realm of phenomena.

Science studies the laws of these changes—the order in which one thing or event succeeds or accompanies another. A scientific law is the statement of this order. A black seed is followed by a particular kind of green plant; it puts forth a cluster of buds and flowers and fruits and seeds; from the seeds, new plants arise; and the same ordered series of events go on endlessly. In the world of physical substance or matter, a heap of black and soft gun-powder, for instance, is followed by a deafening and blinding explosion, and similarly innumerable other physical and chemical changes follow one another according to some law, in some cause-and-effect order.

Everywhere there is the rule of law. One thing arises in *relation* to or *dependent* on another (*pratitya Samutpada,* in Pali, *paticca Samuppada*). Buddha does not say that the first event is the *creator* or cause of the second, nor that it *evolves* into the latter. He points out only their concomitance—their presence together and their absence together.

The causal law operates not only in the material and biological world but also in the realm of consciousness or mind, of thoughts and emotions, desires, habits and character. In this realm of conscious and moral life, it is known as the law of Karma. The moral life and its features were explained by Buddha as the third Great Truth or Arya Satya. He spoke of the moral life and its requirements as an "eight-fold path," comprising Right Belief, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Thinking and Right Rapture or Intuition.

The causal law of Karma has a two-fold result. It forms good or bad habits or character and it has also good or bad external results. If a man insults and injures others and thinks evil thoughts or has mean and wicked desires, he cannot expect others to react to him with gratitude or courtesy or his thoughts and character to be noble and happy. Buddha points out that besides this law of cause and effect, there is in man the *freedom* of will to choose as he likes the right causes or actions and thereby get the results he needs. In himself, he can change his old habits or character and from the external world also he can get better reactions, if he so chooses and makes the right effort.

Buddha urges that since there is *free will* in man, there is no justification for fatalism—for saying that man *must* suffer and cannot change his past habits or character or the course of his life. Stating this truth carefully and precisely, Buddha said, 'it is not right to say a man *must* reap according to his deeds, but only that what a man reaps is *in accordance with* his deeds'. (*Anguttara Nikaya*, III. 99).

Buddha knew that it is a hard and difficult process to change one's character or ingrained habits. He gave several practical suggestions to help his disciples. He advised them to be earnest in their resolution to change and reform, and in their repentance (*samvega*) for their evil actions and habits. To get rid of bad habits of thought and desires, Buddha advised his disciples (1) to turn their attention away from the bad thoughts and desires, (2) to think constantly good and noble thoughts of serving others or of compassion, etc., (3) to think of the long train of the evil results of one's habits and conduct to oneself and others, (4) to analyse and trace out the origins of the evil habits and desires, in some early misunderstanding, evil company, jealousy or anger, and (5) to strengthen the will by some physical penance like a fast or some such act of extra discipline.

At the higher levels of discipline, for fully dedicated persons, the monks, Buddha taught the yoga discipline of body and mind, concentration and meditation, which all Indian masters have carefully taught each worthy pupil according to his capacity, age and circumstances. Buddha severely condemned the misuse of such discipline.

He attached great importance to the development of moral qualities and meditation (*dhyana*) on them. He emphasised universal love (*maitri*), compassion and goodwill (*karuna*), sense of equality (*upekka*) and cheerfulness or the optimism of a progressing moral life (*mudita*).

By following such a path, by living such a life of Dhamma with its eightfold disciplines, man elevates and ennobles himself, and societies advance in happiness and civilization.

Buddha taught further, as the fourth great Truth or Arya Satya, that through such a life, man develops also a profound insight into life and reality, a higher *intuitive* consciousness which Buddha called Prajna. Its perfection is *bodhi,* the highest enlightenment. It is not only the perfection of knowledge but also of moral development, and the Master called it Nirvana.

The good qualities which a man establishes in his character are conserved permanently and are never lost. Buddha urges that through many lives, the individual who is progressing on the right path, rises to an abiding perfection, the Nirvana. This means that good and evil are not equally real. The good is positive, and evil is negative, the negation or absence of the good. Evil cannot build up and increase life, nourish or evolve it, but only breaks it down, destroys or negates it. Only the good can build, rehabilitate and evolve life. Buddha emphasised this positive and immortal power of the good, its power to conquer evil ultimately in oneself and others.

So, to those who asked him questions about ultimate principles like the soul or self, Reality, the finite and Infinite, the changing and Permanent, he gave the answer that the conquering power of the good is enough as the primary truth and basis of life, or he gave no answer at all but kept silent, or he gave both answers, yes and no.

But Buddha did not really deny the soul or ultimate reality. He declared: "He who holds that there is no soul is a man with false notions." (Warren: *Buddhism in Translations*. p. 161). Buddha was only anxious that the idea of self should not give a wrong twist or bias to the whole of ethical life. The prominence of the self makes the spiritual life a mere struggle to secure something for one's own self. It brings into the ethical life and its progress a kind of selfish atmosphere. Further, Buddha said, the notion of the soul or self is very difficult to define precisely as it progresses and rises from stage to stage.

Buddha taught and exemplified a sublime quality and standard of goodness. It is said that when the gates of Heaven were opened to him and Infinite personal happiness lay before him, he turned away from it, saying he would continue to work for the sorrowing creatures of the world and see the last of them enter the gates of Heaven before him.

It was for the sake of ennobling and purifying the motives of morality and emphasising its primary importance that Buddha set aside and even partly denied some philosophical principles. He was quite aware of this limited range of his own teachings. To impress this on his disciples, Buddha on one occasion took a handful of leaves and showing them to his disciples, said that his teachings were only a fraction of the whole truth, just as his handful of leaves were of the entire leaves in the forest.

His followers, however, some of whom were brilliant thinkers, developed the philosophical principles in the subsequent centuries.

Buddha was not against independent reflection, inquiry or criticism. His appeal was not to blind faith but to earnest inquiry and personal effort. He declared: "And whosoever, Ananda, either now or after I am gone, shall be a lamp unto themselves and a refuge unto themselves, shall betake themselves to no external refuge, but holding fast to the Truth as their lamp shall not look for refuge to any one besides themselves,—it is they who shall reach the very topmost height. But they must be anxious to learn."

Buddha emphasised also the value of Beauty and regarded it as co-extensive with the good life. Ananda once said to the Master: "Half of the holy life, O, Lord, is friendship with the beautiful, association with the beautiful, communion with the beautiful." The Master said: "It is not so, Ananda, it is not so. It is not half of the holy life; it is the whole of the holy life." (*Samyutta Nikaya*, V. 2.). Buddha meant not mere physical or external beauty of thought, word and deed, the beauty of the good life.

He thus emphasised the three values of Truth, Goodness and Beauty—*Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram.*

His greatest lesson however is the primacy and ultimacy of ethics, and the sublimity of its ideal and fruition. Some of his noble moral maxims are proverbial the world over. They call for profound love, self-control and charity in the face of evil. "Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred, hatred ceases by love." "One may conquer a thousand men in battle, but he who conquers himself is the greatest victor." "Not by birth but by conduct does a man belong to a low caste or high." "To those who have sinned, who would use hard speech, strewing salt as it were upon the wound of their fault?" "Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good."

Buddha organised the Sangha or "brotherhood" of monks and nuns for missionary work as well as for a quiet contemplative and ascetic life in monastic groups. He exhorted his disciples to "go into all lands and preach the gospel and tell them that the poor and lowly, the rich and the high are all one, and that all groups unite in this religion as do the rivers in the sea."

His lay disciples continued their old domestic rituals according to Vedic or customary rules.

The gospel of Buddha spread rapidly all over Asia. Great emperors like Asoka (3rd century B.C.), Kanishka (1st century A.D.) and Harsha 7th century A.D.) gave special patronage to its propagation. Asoka sent his sister and son to Ceylon with a sapling of the Bodhi tree at Gaya. Other missions were sent by him to Egypt, Syria, Greece and perhaps also to Tibet, China and other countries in Asia.

Buddhism has flourished for centuries in Asia —from Japan to Egypt and Central Asia, from

Mongolia to South-East Asia and Ceylon. The greatest Buddhist temple or monument ever built was in South-East Asia in Java—the Borobudur. In Western Asia, in the eighth century A.D., Buddha was presented by a Christian writer (St. John of Damascus) as a Christian Apostle, and in the 16th century, he was received and canonised as a Christian saint by a decree of the Pope at Rome.

In India itself, Hindu religion and philosophy have paid their greatest homage to the Master, as a Divine incarnation. He has become the symbol and soul of Asia, and is a World teacher with a universal message of Dhamma and Sheela.

4

MAHAVIRA

Dr. A. S. Gopani

The sixth century B.C. is one of the most eventful periods in history. It was characterised by mental stir and spiritual urge of an unusual nature. New experiments were tried and values reassessed. People longed for new light.

India, at this time, was passing through a period of transition and uncertainty. The superiority of one class over the other was questioned and exploitation had become unbearable. It was in this atmosphere that Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and the last Tirthankara, appeared on the scene.

His birthplace was Kundagrama, a prosperous suburb of Vaisali, somewhere about twenty-five miles north of modern Patna. It was the principal centre of the Kshatriyas called Jnatrikas, Nayas or Natas and was something of an oligarchic republic ruled over by Mahavira's father, Siddhartha. He belonged to Kasyapa Gotra and his mother's name was Trishala, a sister of Chetaka, a most powerful ruler of Videha, who had both Licchavis and Mallas always at his beck and call.

Mahavira was born on the 13th of the bright half of Chaitra in the year 599 B.C. His coming into the world was hailed with great rejoicings by the members of his family and the people of the city; every house in every street was beautifully decorated and illuminated, befitting the occasion. He is sometimes referred to in the Jaina canon and remembered by the Jainas as Videha, the son of Videhadatta; as Vaisaliya, a citizen of Vaisali; as Kasyapa, one belonging to the Kasyapa Gotra; as Arhat, Arihanta, Aruhanta and also sometimes as Buddha.

Truly speaking, Mahavira is an appellation which gods gave him as he annihilated, in the manner of a formidable fighter, quite a big army of Karmas, with the ever-sharp weapon of Tapas when he was a monk. His real name is Vardhamana which is significant in the sense that the prosperity and popularity of the father increased after his birth.

The Buddhists and his other contemporaries also, on the other hand, refer to him in their works more often as Nigantha Nataputta. There is a host of other names such as Sanmati, etc., given to him, but he is most commonly known as Mahavira and we shall refer to him as such in this article.

The facts of his early life as collected from early works are not many. No complete picture of his boyhood emerges from these. For detailed information, one, therefore, has to rely on later accounts which are intermixed with miracles and myths. Here is an illustration to show his bold and brave nature:

"Vardhamana was once upon a time playing in his father's garden in the company of his friends. He saw an infuriated elephant running amok in the crowd and rushing towards them. His friends were afraid of the impending danger and they fled away leaving him all alone. Immediately deciding to face the mad elephant with calmness and courage, he made a dash towards it, caught hold of the elephant's trunk and climbed straightaway on its back."

Mahavira had a sound physique. His limbs were all perfect and proportionate. Strength appeared as if overflowing from them and he was equally strong in mind, heart and soul too. He was brought up in a royal atmosphere and learnt all the arts and sciences worth knowing. It is clear that he had made up his mind from his very childhood to humanise the society and to so orientate the religious teachings as to wipe out inequality, exploitation, autocracy and injustice, especially in the social and religious domains. His religious crusade against the tyranny of the so-called self-appointed custodians was exclusively based on the principles of Jainism which he ably expounded and interpreted to the people of his time.

Mere preaching without practice was hypocrisy, he thought, and therefore, he wanted to renounce the world in the prime of life, but his parents desired to see their son live a normal life and arranged Mahavira's marriage, which was ultimately solemnized. In this matter Mahavira respected the wishes of his parents, although his heart was not in it. Yasoda was the name of his wife and in course of time, Priyadarsana, a daughter, was born to them. Out of sheer regard for his parents, Mahavira gave an assurance that he would not renounce the world so long as they were alive.

In his twenty-eighth year, when his parents died, he informed his elder brother, Nandivardhana, of his original desire, but the latter prevailed upon him to postpone his renunciation in view of the bereavement caused by the death of their parents. Mahavira yielded and put off his departure by two years more.

Mahavira ultimately threw off the worldly shackles at the age of thirty and started his religious career as a homeless monk, fully convinced of the ephemeral nature of all that was going on around him and fired by a zeal in quest of the Supreme Truth. This great event is vividly and touchingly described in the *Kalpasutra*.

Mahavira, destined to be the Tirthankara, was gifted from his very birth with three kinds of knowledge technically called Mati, Sruta and Avadhi and got the fourth one called Manahparyaya on the eve of his renunciation. Only the Supreme Knowledge—all-comprehensive knowledge—the fifth and the last, technically called Kevala, now remained to be obtained by him, and this he did by leading an ascetic life for twelve years or so.

He went about stark naked and did not even keep such a trifling possession as a bowl for collecting food and preferred to eat in the hollow of his palms. He took no notice that there was something like a body. Insects and worms crawled and crept on his body and gnats and mosquitoes and bees and wasps bit him and stung him. People got shocked at his unusually uncouth appearance and they drove him away, beating him with stones and sticks. For days and nights, sometimes for months together, he would remain in silent meditation, starving his body but feasting his soul, exposing himself to cold and heat and rains. He talked to none, gave no interviews and dropped all sorts of formalities.

Absolute self-control of body, speech and mind is the essential part of his conception of Tapas. Mere restraint of the body or only outward austerities could not take one very far. If one wanted to work out a complete annihilation of *Karmic* forces, the surest and quickest method was to practise the three-fold restraint of body, speech and mind. That is to say, it should be both outward and inward. Thus the Tapas automatically came to be divided into fasting, absolute chastity, relentless meditation and the most rigid observance of the rules and regulations regarding eating, drinking, sitting, standing, sleeping, speaking.

The *Acaranga Sutra* has given a soul-stirring account of his Sadhana directed to the attainment of the goal.

Mahavira showed reverence to all forms of life which included, among others, the earth-bodies, water-bodies, fire-bodies, wind-bodies and the vegetable-bodies. He never accepted what was specially prepared for him. He was circumspect in walking, speaking, begging, placing and in attending to calls of nature. He was guarded in his activities of mind, speech and body. He harboured no anger, no pride, no deceit and no greed. He bore no malice and showed no hatred. To none had he any feeling of attachment or aversion. He had no friends and no foes. He was equanimous to one and all. He wanted no support like the firmament and knew no obstacles like the wind. His heart was as clear as an autumnal night and as unaffected as a lotus-leaf. Controlled in senses like a tortoise, alone like a rhinoceros, free like a bird, valorous like an elephant, unassailable like a lion, steady as Meru and deep as ocean, he went through his life of Sadhana. He utilized every moment and every atom of his energy for spiritual advancement and progress. In the course of his travels, he visited many villages, towns and cities where he met many a hostile Parivrajaka who did everything to harass him, and also encountered untold suffering and unbearable persecution at the hands of tempter gods.

In his second rainy season which he spent at Nalanda, he met Gosalaka Makhaliputta who was attracted towards him with ulterior motives. Gosalaka found that Mahavira was popular among people and was practically revered by them. He nurtured an ambition that he too should be an equal to Mahavira, if not a superior. With a view to mastering the art of earning a name and fame, he associated with Mahavira who turned down more than once Gosalaka's respectful offer to be his pupil as he doubted, and rightly too, his bonafides. Gosalaka, who was so thick-skinned and practical that he swallowed this insult without a change of mien and stuck fast to Mahavira as an unwanted associate, if not as a pupil.

Company with the great is never fruitless and Gosalaka did, indeed, learn some occult secrets such as those of fiery power (तेजोलेस्सा) and with the help of these he impressed the masses and secured a following. He, later, picked up a quarrel with Mahavira on a flimsy philosophical ground and parted company. He, then, turned out to be one of the greatest adversaries of Mahavira and even went to the length of using the fiery power against Mahavira from whom he had managed to get the secret. He started a propaganda against Mahavira virulently and vehemently, used every means to defame him but ultimately to no avail as it is the Truth and only the Truth that wins in the long run.

When he was breathing his last, he confessed that it was Mahavira who was the real Jina and not he and he advised his pupils to believe in him, to respect him as such. Thus ended the tragic episode of Gosalaka bringing out in bold relief before the public the spiritual mettle of which Mahavira was made.

After a strenuous, unparalleled, historical Sadhana spread over twelve years, Mahavira attained the unequalled Supreme Knowledge called Kevala on the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Vaisakha outside the city of Jrimbhikagrama, in the field of Syamaka under a Sala tree, on the bank of the river Rijupalika.

Thus at the age of forty-two he became a Jina who saw everything and knew everything.

After enlightenment, he felt he was justified in propagating the truth he knew. He travelled far and wide; came to villages, cities and towns; mixed and moved with all; preached simple truths in simple language, in a simple manner; held discussions and solved the doubts of all men, women and children, the wealthy and the poor, the educated and the illiterate.

Mahavira once came to know of a sacrifice, organized on a grand scale, by a certain Brahmana named Somilacharya. He rushed to the place and addressed the people who had gathered, enlightening them. While preaching the Gospel, unequivocally he declared that the road leading to final liberation consisted of Right Vision, Right Knowledge and Right Character, expounded the principle of Ahimsa and described the nature of the seven Tattvas. The result was that with so many others, eleven Brahmin chiefs who had come there with bands of pupils became converts. These eleven chiefs later came to be known as Ganadharas who were heirs-apparent to the spiritual legacy of Mahavira and whose contribution to the consolidation of Jainism is more valuable than that of any other disciples. Mahavira seized the opportunity and strengthened the position of the fourfold Order reinforcing it with these mass conversions. Mahavira's genius for organization was clearly evident. He was now at the zenith of his career as a prophet.

Mahavira had a following in the princely order also. It is a historical truth that without a royal patronage, direct or indirect, propagation of any religion could not be as speedy and wide as expected. Mahavira had staunch followers in King Udayana, Dadhivahana, Satanika, Chanda Pradyota and Srenika. In addition to these, there were also others such as the Ganarajas of Kasi and Kosala, the nine Licchavis and Mallakis. Ten lay followers, no less important than the previous ones, mentioned above, have also been referred to in the *Uvasagadasao*. Alabhika, Campa, Kampilyapura, Rajagriha, Sravasti, Vanijyagrama and Varanasi are some of the many important places visited by Mahavira. In all of these cities, Mahavira had many devout disciples who had fabulous wealth, enjoyed high social status and were all pious-minded, and they did a great lot to propagate the Jaina religion, which found a ready acceptance among a large section of the people. Mahavira's personality evoked immediate response and respect in his disciples. They found in Mahavira a saviour who had a ready solution for their trials and tribulations, here and beyond. Mahavira's words had the force of law, and his character was irresistible. To his followers he was a beacon light, a sheet-anchor.

In the course of his career as an Enlightened Teacher, he passed the rainy seasons in many big cities such as Vaïsali, Sravasti, Rajagriha, Pava, Mithila, Alabhika and Bhadrika. He passed his last rainy season at Pava where in the fourth month on the fifteenth day of the dark half of Kartika, in the last quarter of the night, in King Hastipala's office of the writers, the Enlightened Mahavira breathed his last. He got liberation, final bliss and beatitude. This took place in 527 B.C. at the age of seventy-two. This occasion was a matter for pride and honour for the eighteen chieftains of Kasi and Kosala, as also for the nine Mallakis and Licchavis who, as they all had undying devotion for the departed teacher, celebrated the historical event with bonfires and illuminations proclaiming 'The light of intelligence is gone and we are making an illumination with the material object.' According to Jainas, the traces of the origin of the Divali celebrations are to be found here in this programme of illumination by the confederate kings and chieftains.

It is now an acknowledged fact of history that both Buddha and Mahavira were contemporaries. Though they never met, they tried to understand each other's point of view and stated their dispassionate opinions before their respective followers, recluses, lay disciples and devotees.

The teachings of Mahavira can be compressed into three significant words, namely, Ahimsa, Karmavada and Syadvada.

The Ahimsa of Mahavira comprehends Ahimsa in thought, word and action. It is not a negative principle as is sometimes erroneously believed by some. When we do not help a person when we can, it means Himsa. So it is not merely an abstention from injury but a rendering of active service to others, of course, with non-attachment. Though the aim and end of Jainism is consummation *par excellence* of one's own personality and thus is individualistic in approach, it does not altogether exclude the objective side of ethics also. Such a formulation and application of the principle of Ahimsa has sure visible effects in other fields also. Kings who came under the influence of Jainism granted protection to different forms of life by law. It fostered vegetarianism and mitigated the rigour and ruthlessness of the criminal law, prescribing capital punishment for few crimes. To sum up, it contributed a great deal in its own way towards humanising the society. Jainism recognizes that Karma by itself and without the intervention of any outside agency, divine or mundane, is adequate to explain the whole world of experience and thus to throw on the individual himself the whole burden of responsibility for what he thinks, speaks and does. The theory of Karma gives absolute religious independence and freedom to an individual. Nothing can interfere with his activities and it is, therefore, the doer who has solely to experience the result, good or bad. It thus saved the individual from being victimized by the autocratic and despotic sections of the society. Syadvada teaches one the art of looking at the other person from his or her point of view. In Mahavira's day it removed unnecessary controversies, created an atmosphere of tolerance and gave an over-all picture of the Supreme Truth.

Mahavira's contribution is distinctly this. He preached: all are potentially capable of attaining perfection. No divine favour is required for this. One is solely responsible for what one does, speaks and thinks. Merit and not the birth is the determinant of his status in society. Inherent ability and not the sex is the standard for admission into the Order. Sacrifice of the animal is to be substituted by the sacrifice of the brute self. The means is not justified by the end: Mahavira's Sangha was open to all, irrespective of caste, colour, and sex. 'Mortify the flesh to develop the Spirit,' he declared. He delivered his message in the tongue of the people. He attacked aristocratic aloofness and mystifying secrecy of other thinkers of the day. In a nutshell, Mahavira undertook to work out and propagate a veritable spiritual democracy in the form of Jainism.

5

ASOKA THE GREAT

Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerjee

Asoka is a unique character in the annals of royalty and indeed, as a man too.

H. G. Wells considers him as the greatest of kings.

He was great as the ruler of an extensive dominion (*mahalake hi vijite*) which was large like *prithivi*, as he himself describes it in his proclamations written on the rocks of ages (Rock Edicts XIV and V). This far-flung empire, extending from Persia to Ceylon, was his legacy from his grandfather Chandragupta who had acquired it by his conquests.

One of these was the eastern part of the Syrian Empire under its king Seleukos who invaded India under Chandragupta in about 304 B.C. but was defeated and had to cede to the victor the provinces called Gedrosia (Baluchistan), Aria (Herat), Arachosia (Kandahar) and Paropamsidae (Hindukush).

Thus Asoka as his successor came to rule over a greater India which extended from Syria (Persia) to Tamraparni and was able to call the Syrian king Antiochus II (Amtiyaka) as his immediate neighbour (*Anta*).

The only addition he made to this empire was Kalinga which he conquered by a bloody war against an unconquered (*avijita*) people, cultured and socially advanced, whose heroic defence of their liberties against the aggressor resulted in colossal carnage and casualties in dead, wounded and captives.

This bloody battle wrought at once a moral revolution in Asoka who forthwith forswore all war as an absolute evil and changed completely from the cult of violence to that of *Ahimsa* or non-violence.

Thus Asoka's title to greatness was not only territorial but moral, not merely the geographical extent of his empire, but rather the principles of its administration.

He stands out as the pioneer of Peace, peace between man and man, and between man and every sentient creature, for the sanctity of life and for abolition of violence in every sphere, domestic and foreign, internal and international.

He organised measures for the relief of suffering of men and animals by provision of medical treatment (*chikitsa*) with medicines derived from sources such as "herbs, roots and fruits" (*aushadha-mula-phala*) obtained by import where necessary and also by cultivation in the country of medicinal plants in specialised botanical gardens or plantations (Rock Edict II).

In his Rock Edict III, he reports that his humanitarian measures were making good progress in the country and also in the states on its frontiers (the *Antas*), while his religion of universal brotherhood impelled him to despatch to the more prominent foreign, western countries fully-equipped medical missions charged with the duty of introducing to them these measures of social service and welfare.

The Kings of these Western European countries who were his contemporaries are mentioned by him in the Inscriptions (RE XIII) as follows:

(i) Antiochus Theos II (*Amtiyoko nama yona Raja*) (261-246 B.C.) of Syria; (ii) Ptolemy II Philadelphos (*Turamaye*) (285-247 B.C.) of Egypt; (iii) Antigones Gonatas (*Amtikini*) (278-239 B.C.) of Macedon; (iv) Magas (*Maka*) (300-250 B.C.) of Cyrene; and (v) Alexander (*Alikasudaro*) (273-258 B.C.) of Epirus.

As to the States on his frontiers within the purview of his humanitarian work, RE II mentions 'the Cholas, Pandyas, Keralaputras (modern Kerala State) and Satyaputras of the South up to Tamraparni; in the north-west, Yonas, Kambojas, and others; and in the interior Bhojas, Pitimikas, Andhras and Palidas.

From the measures for the relief of bodily suffering by treatment of physical diseases, Asoka went on to apply his idealism to a wider sphere, that of relieving mankind itself from the scourge and suffering of war.

He proposed the outlawry and abolition of war itself as an absolute evil (*adharma*) and replacing bloody conquests by what he calls *Dharma-Vijaya,* the conquest of righteousness, the Triumph of Truth which is won by the willing consent of the conquered to be converted to this new doctrine in a feeling of spontaneous devotion (*priti-rasa*).

He declared that "there should not be any fresh conquest by violence" (*navam vijayam ma vijetaviya*). He applied this doctrine of Peace first to himself by stopping at the conquest of Kalinga as his last conquest in life.

Asoka was thus the first in history to declare disarmament and abolition of war as the foundations of universal Peace, and to apply to his own empire the principles that he preached.

These principles humanity has been still struggling to achieve through international institutions like the League of Nations and its successor, the U.N.O.

Asoka was thus far ahead of his age in his moral and political idealism.

He was more anxious to preach peace and spread morals than to extend his territory. By his Peace and Welfare Missions, he was building up a larger spiritual dominion and Kingdom of Righteousness, an empire of thought resting on the force of law, and not on the law of force.

He now devoted himself most assiduously to the moral uplift of his people by creating a separate Ministry of Morals which embarked on a whirlwind campaign for mass instruction in righteousness.

In his Inscriptions, he insists on the purity of the home and cultivation of domestic virtues as the foundation of religious life.

He lays a new emphasis on the view that religion is more a matter of conduct and character (*dharma-mangala*) than rituals and ceremonies (RE IX).

He points out that the best of gifts (*dharma-dana*) was not that of material perishable goods but the gift of character (RE XI).

In a country of multiplicity of sects and creeds, he emphasized toleration as the primary religion which must recognise that there is a *sara* or essence which is common to all religions, a universal moral standard as their fundamental basis.

This spirit of toleration is to be cultivated by followers of different religions by (1) coming together in assemblies (*samavaya*) to discuss their diffferent doctrines in a breadth of outlook (*bahuka*); (2) studying their different religious texts like a *Bahusruta* and (3) restraining thoughtless criticism (*vachoguti*) (RE XII).

But Asoka was not merely an idealist and a religious reformer. He was also great as a builder. He was a builder of cities and palaces, of *stupas* and *viharas*, of rock-cut caves, and monolithic pillars and also of public works of utility of different kinds.

The Chinese traveller, Fa-hien, seeing his palace at Pataliputra, after a lapse of over 600 years, saw the royal palace and halls still existing now as of old, and as the work not of men but of spirits which piled up the stones, reared the walls and gates, and executed the elegant carving and inlaid sculpture work in a way which no human hand of this world could accomplish.

He built *stupas* as high as peaks of hills (*giri-sringa-kalpaih*) as described by the Divyavadna. He had caves cut as the abode of ascetics in the Khalatika hills of Barabar and Nagarjuni near Gaya, with their walls shining like mirrors.

The polish of the Asokan pillar is "the despair of modern masons" (Marshall). It was so shining that Tom Coryat and Whittaker (Kerr's *Voyages and Travels* IX, p. 423) coolly described it as "a pillar of brass", Chaplain Terry as "a pillar of marble", and Bishop Heber as one of "cast metal".

The pillar also is an example of the art of dressing, chiselling, and shaping of stones. The capitals of the columns were shaped into figures of animals which Marshall considers as "masterpieces in point of both style and technique, examples of finest carving".

The location of the pillars at their appointed sites presented a difficult problem of transport. They were huge monolithic shafts with a weight of 50 tons and height of 50 ft. which were hewn out of the neighbouring quarries of Chunar hills, fashioned at the central workshop at Pataliputra and transported to distances of 1,000 miles to be located at remote places like Meerut.

The *Tarikhi-Firozshahi* states that Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlak, to remove the Asokan Pillar from Topra (Ambala) to Delhi, had to employ the labour force of 8,400 men pulling at the 42 wheels of a cart to carry it. But, according to the Persian Mss., *Sirati-i-Firozshahi* of A.D. 1370 (20th year of Firoz Shah's reign), elephants were first tried and then 20,000 men for carrying the pillar to the river, placing it on boats, and for subsequent operations ending in its re-erection at Firozabad in Delhi (see *Arch. Memoir* No. 52 on Kotla Firoz Shah). Firoz Shah also removed to Delhi the other pillar from Meerut.

Mauryan engineering was quite up to solving these difficult problems of transport and haulage of stupendous weights by suitable mechanical contrivances.

It has also to its credit the construction of the earliest reservoir and dam for irrigation in India in Saurashtra.

According to the Inscription of the Saka King Rudradaman I of 150 A.D. a beautiful lake (*tataka*) aptly called *Sudarsana* was constructed on the hills named Raivataka and Urjayat in the Saurashtra Province of the Maurya Empire with its governor (*Rashtriya*) named Pushyagupta Vaisya under emperor Chandragupta Maurya.

The reservoir was created by damming up the flow of the hill streams Palasini and others, and equipped with "conduits (*pranali*), drains, and means to guard against foul matters" by the Yavana Governor of Saurashtra named Tushaspha under Asoka.

Lastly, Asoka's greatness is proved by his solicitude for the welfare of the masses and the travelling public by the construction of public works of utility which included "(a) planting of shade-giving banyan trees and groves of mango trees on the highways, (b) providing wells (*udupana*) at every half *kos* of the roads, (c) construction of rest-houses (*nishadya*) and (d) providing watering places (*apana*) for use of men and cattle" (PE VII and RE II).

Asoka is also unique in leaving behind him a record of his work in Inscriptions which read like his autobiography. The Inscriptions are incised on stone, on rock and pillar to be read as his permanent proclamations of righteousness by the masses for whose convenience they were located and distributed all over his far-flung empire from Shahbaz Garhi and Mansehra in the north-west to Mysore in the south, Kalsi in the north, Dhuli in eastern India, and Maski and Kurnool in the Deccan.

6

JESUS CHRIST

Rev. J. W. Airan

The period between their slavery in Egypt (1500 B.C.) and their settling down in Palestine (1200-1000 B. C.) several years before the birth of Jesus Christ was an extremely critical period in the national history of the people of Israel. Their journeys through the vast deserts that lay between Egypt and Palestine and their continuous struggle against the powerful inhabitants of the lands through which they had to pass, together with some of the unique leadership in all history and a very definite faith in a righteous God welded these people into one nation.

Their national life had been one of ups and downs. Thus, for instance, they had kings like David and Solomon whose fame had spread far and wide and during whose reigns the neighbouring nations paid tributes to the Kingdom of Israel. On the other hand there were periods in their history when they were carried away as captives by conquering armies!

There were however some unmistakable trends in their national culture which converged on a firm belief in the existence of a living personal and righteous God and a knowledge of the corrupting influence of sin. They believed that an individual's sin could bring calamity over the *entire* nation. This developed in them a desire for a God who could forgive sin.

Any calamity which befell these people brought them to repentance and redirected their hopes towards a time when God would send a Deliverer. There were some who believed that the mission of that Deliverer would be to free the people of Israel from foreign domination. But there was always a small minority which continued to believe that such a Deliverer would deliver them from the bondage of sin, which done, they would be a happy people.

It is this expectation which gives a peculiar significance to the birth of Jesus Christ in Palestine and among the people of Israel. The people of Israel were awaiting the coming of the "Messiah"—the Deliverer. The prophets including Isaiah and Jeremiah, and in the days of Jesus himself John the Baptist, prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah. It was in the midst of such expectations that Jesus Christ was born in the little village of Bethlehem, not far from Nazareth, in the year 8 or 6 B.C. as the son of Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth.

After an intensive preparation Jesus set out to proclaim his mission at the age of 30, and after an eventful career of less than three years met his end at the hands of the people among whom he was born. To those who constituted the religious hierarchy of the Jews this Jesus was one who was out to destroy their ancient culture whereas to those who followed him (even after his death and who were later called Christians) he was the Son of God who came into this world at an appointed time in history and according to a definite promise of God to reconcile man to God.

The life story of Jesus Christ is told in the first four books of the New Testament of the Bible.

The Bible itself consists of a collection of books known as the Old Testament and another collection of books known as the New Testament. The first four books of the New Testament are known as the "Gospels". The word "Gospel" means *good news* and hence it is obvious why these biographers of Jesus were not so keen on telling the whole life story of Jesus as one conveying what to them was the "good news". All these four Gospels end with the story of the Crucifixion, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The fifth book of the New Testament known as the "Acts of the Apostles" tells of the missionary work of Jesus' disciples after the earthly existence of Jesus had come to an end. It also tells of classic missionary journeys of Paul and of the establishment of the Christian Church. One has therefore to read these five books together to find out what essentially was the good news and the kind of new life which was made possible through this good news.

There is very little known of the details of the life of Christ out of these sources. Jesus himself wrote nothing, nor did he cause anything to be written. And yet it cannot be denied that Jesus Christ was a historical figure, who lived in Palestine, who "went about doing good", and who spoke of the Kingdom of God, and was towards the end subjected to great humiliation and torture by the Jews when Pilate was the Roman Governor in Palestine. (The Jews were then a subject nation and Palestine was a part of the Roman Empire.)

The first words of Jesus ever to be recorded are significant of the Work and Mission of Jesus.

At the age of twelve, Jesus had gone to Jerusalem along with his parents to observe a religious Feast. When they were about to return, the parents found Jesus missing. Later on they found him in the temple engaged in discussion with the great religious leaders of the day. Asked by his mother why he acted that way, he quickly asked, "Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" These were the first recorded words of Jesus. It was this "Father's business" which engaged his attention even from the age of twelve and from that time to the age of 30 he prepared himself for his Ministry and as one of his biographers had stated "he increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man".

The ethical teaching of Jesus *cannot* be separated from the religion of Jesus. In fact, some critics point out that the bulk of his teaching cannot be called 'original'. He himself often began his discourses by saying "you have heard it said......" And yet the *emphasis* that he laid on certain aspects of man's behaviour vests his ethical teaching with an authority which makes him stand out as "the moral leader of humanity."

Thus, for instance, Jesus wanted his disciples not to withdraw from the world but to face its problems, but *always relying on God*. It has sometimes been pointed out that Jesus merely wanted people to love their neighbours as themselves, to be good Samaritans and to conform their lives to the precepts contained in the Sermon on the Mount *so that* there may emerge the ideal society of the future. This is not so. The Kingdom of God of which Jesus spoke was not to be a product of human effort. Men, no doubt, were expected to exercise their free will in seeking the Kingdom of God, but the Kingdom of God itself was to be the gift of God. While seeking this Kingdom of God, men were *not* to withdraw themselves from the world for fear of its contamination, but to remain in this world. And yet in a way they were not to be of this world. Since Jesus did not think of the Kingdom of God as separated from the common man whom God yearned to save, his teaching has been deeply social and has supplied a unique dynamism for social progress all along.

And yet it is significant that Jesus did not step forth as a social reformer. It is true that he preached the equality of man and insisted that the rich share their wealth with the poor. It is also true that he openly mingled with the outcastes of the society in which he lived. But this he did, so that men may realize that they are the children of God, that God is eager to save them and that *all* are in need of being saved. This is where one may discover the religious basis of his ethical teaching. When he lays stress on obedience to certain laws and rules, he does so with a motive "that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven". It is in this light that his insistence on obedience to God and on imitating Him to attain fullness of life needs to be viewed.

Jesus was the weak man's friend. How can a mere man fight against evil? What did Jesus mean when he said, "resist not evil"? Did he recommend a mere passive toleration of evil? In this connection one or two incidents from his life may be cited.

Once he entered the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and made a whip of cords and drove out those who sold and bought in the temple (For, they resold right in the temple the very offerings which the worshippers had placed in the temple).

He once expressed his indignation of the priestly class by calling them "a brood of vipers". He did not stand by helplessly when a wrong was being perpetrated. His precept to "turn the other cheek" was meant to check the obvious tendency to retaliate rather than to encourage a sense of helplessness. Jesus' teaching on this point has been misunderstood. It does not call for creating conditions for encouraging the evil, but emphasizes the possibility of "overcoming the evil with good".

When Jesus preached the Kingdom of God he did not leave out of account the fact of the existence of the kingdoms of this world. Whatever the motive which prompted some of his Jewish audience once to ask him "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar or no?", the forthright answer which Jesus gave: "Render unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's", has lent itself to various interpretations. (The Jews were Roman subjects at that time). Was this answer which Jesus gave evasive? He asked of the enquirer to show the coin which he carried and used for his own convenience and benefit. It bore the effigy of Caesar! If the enquirer used the Caesar's coin and derived benefit from it, where was the moral issue involved in giving the Caesar something in return? Jesus himself observed all laws of the land— nothing could be brought against him at his trial! He may have been silent on many points; but this should be viewed in the light of the political situation in his country at that time, but above all *in his faith that with the coming of God's Kingdom all injustice will be removed*.

It is not possible in such a short article to touch upon all the aspects of his teaching. Suffice it to say that while announcing the establishment by God himself of the Kingdom of God, he did not ignore the realities of the earthly life, the need for developing personal virtues and a proper attitude towards human society. But all this was motivated by his faith in the Kingdom of God which was not something that men will establish by their personal efforts, but which will be in accordance with the will of God.

Finally, failing to bring any substantial charge against Jesus, the princely hierarchy of the Jews accused him of blasphemy since he called himself the son of God.

The Roman Governor, Pilate, pronounced the judgment saying that he found no guilt in Jesus but he bowed to the fury of the mob and handed Jesus over to the Jews.

According to the prevalent practice Jesus was to be crucified. He was not crucified alone but there were two malefactors who were awaiting the sentence of death, and were also crucified along with Jesus, one on either side.

One of the biographers reports a conversation on the cross between Jesus and the malefactors. One of the malefactors mocked at Jesus whereas the other turned to Jesus and said, "please remember me when you come back in your glory". Without any bitterness towards those who tortured him and mocked at him, he turned to this malefactor and promised him "God's peace".

It is typical of the life of Jesus that even at the tender age of 12 he showed the awareness of his being concerned with his "Father's business" and that when he died that death should have been between two outcastes of the society.

If his birth was prophetic, his death was equally so: He came to reconcile man to God, and that was the last act of his earthly visible life: reconciling a malefactor to God, promising him "God's peace".

This short article may well close with the following quotations from John Masefield's "The Trial of Jesus":

> *Procula*: Do you think he (Jesus) is dead?
> *Longinus*: No, lady, I don't think.
> *Procula*: Then where is he?
> *Longinus*: Let loose in the world, lady, where neither Roman nor Jew can stop his truth.

7

APPAR

Dr. V. A. Devasenapathi

Saivite tradition in Tamilnad speaks of sixty-three saints. But this number is not to be taken as exact or final. Even of these sixty-three, we have group names like, 'Those without false allegiance,' and 'Devotees of the Lord-beyond'. 'Beyond' here refers to those beyond the confines of the land and times in which the saints referred to, lived. This is an indication of an undercurrent of belief in Saivism (as for that matter, in Hinduism in general) that whoever worships the Lord (and whatever be the form of worship or the name by which the Lord is addressed) with sincerity and devotion is acceptable to Him and is to be considered a devotee.

Appar, Tirujnanasambandhar, Sundarar and Manikkavachagar are four of the Saivite saints whose names have become household words in Tamilnad. Though they belong to the highest spiritual level, they are considered exemplars *par excellence* of four steps in spiritual life, viz. Charya (cleaning the temple etc.), Kriya (gathering things necessary for worship), Yoga (communion with the Lord) and Jnana (union with the Lord). Their spiritual lives are said to exemplify four kinds of relationship to God—relationship as between (1) master and servant, (2) father and son, (3) two friends and (4) teacher and pupil (or lover and beloved).

Appar was the elder contemporary of Tirujnanasambandhar. His original name was Marulnikkiyar. Another name by which Appar is known is Tirunavukkarasu (Lord of the sacred utterance), a name given by the Lord in appreciation of the saint's poetic gifts.

'Appar' (literally 'Father') was the name by which Tirujnanasambandhar hailed him—a name which combines respect with affection.

Appar was born in the seventh century A.D., in Tiruvamur in South Arcot District (South India). His parents were Pugalanar and Madhiniyar. He had a sister by name, Tilakavatiyar. Tilakavatiyar was engaged to be married to Kalippagai Nayanar. It so happened that Kalippagai Nayanar who was the commander-in-chief of the King's army had to lead a military expedition to the north. He was killed in action. Though the wedding had not taken place, Tilakavatiyar considered herself bound to him and would think of marrying no one else. In the meantime, her parents also died. Grief-stricken, she wanted to put an end to her life. But the disconsolate condition of her brother made her decide to live for his sake.

Appar was an earnest seeker after Truth. Jainism was prevalent at this time in the King's Court as well as among the people. Appar felt the influence of Jainism so much as to give up his own faith and embrace Jainism. He rose to a position of eminence among the Jaina teachers and came to be known as Dharmasena. This course of events saddened the heart of Tilakavatiyar who, becoming a recluse, went to a sacred place in the neighbourhood and engaged herself in doing service in the temple. Her prayer to the Lord was that her brother should come back to his ancestral faith!

The Lord chose to answer Tilakavatiyar's prayer in a peculiar way. Appar was stricken with a severe type of stomach-ache. All efforts of his co-religionists to cure him proved unavailing whereupon he sent word to his sister. She asked him to come to her. When Appar went back to his sister, she gave him the sacred ashes and took him to the temple. As he prayed to the Lord in the temple for forgiveness and cure, the disease was cured. He was blessed with the gift of sacred poesy. From that time on, Appar started visiting temples in various parts of the country and singing the praises of the Lord.

The Jainas were upset by Appar's reconversion to Saivism. This would be a blow to their influence. So they told the King that Appar had feigned illness, thus making it impossible for them to cure him. They asked the King to send for Appar and punish him. When the King's messengers went to him, Appar refused to go to the King saying that he recognised none save the Lord as his master. In a verse which is widely known, he replied that he was subject to none, was not afraid of death, stood in no danger of going to hell, led no false life in the world, was confident that no one could hurt him, knew no (spiritual) disease, was subservient to none, had abiding joy and never any misery—all because as a bond slave of the Lord, he had sought shelter at His Feet.

The King's messengers pleaded with him to go with them as otherwise they would be visited with the King's displeasure. Appar went with them. Advised by the Jainas, the King subjected Appar to ordeals which remind us of those which Prahlada had to undergo. Appar was locked up in a limekiln for a number of days. When they opened it at last, expecting to find him dead, they found him 'calm and cool'. He had been contemplating the Feet of the Lord all the time!

> Like (the melody of) the faultless Vina,
> Like the evening crescent,
> Like the soft southern breeze, like the Spring (conspiring to load and bless with its fruits),
> Like the fragrant flower-covered tank frequented by bees,
> Is the shelter of the Feet of my Father and Lord.

(It will be seen here that the senses of hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell could feast without satiety by being sublimated and attuned to divinity). As Appar sang this song, He who protects us from the 'fretful fever of life', protected His devotee from the heat of the limekiln.

Finding Appar alive, the King's men made him drink poison. The *Puranas* say that Siva drank poison to save the worlds from destruction. The blue throat of Siva is a perpetual reminder of this act of mercy. It was but natural for the devotee of Siva to drink poison and feel no untoward effects! The king's men set a wild elephant on Appar. As the elephant rushed towards him, Appar sang that as he was a devotee of the Lord (whose name is potent to kill the mischief of not one—but five strong elephants, viz. our five senses and, Who is the Father of Vinayaka) he feared nothing and had nothing to fear. The elephant went round him respectfully, turned back and charged against the people who had set it against Appar. Finding all these efforts to kill him unsuccessful, a final attempt was made. They tied him to a heavy stone and cast him into the sea expecting that he would be drowned. Appar started uttering the name of the Lord, the name which helps one to swim across the sea of *samsara*. The stone became a float for Appar to reach a neighbouring shore, near Tiruppadirippuliyur. The trials were over and Appar recommenced his practice of worshipping his Lord at all sacred places. In a repentant mood, Mahendravarma Pallava, the king who had persecuted him, went to the saint, and begged him to forgive him and take him back to Saivism. The Saint readily did so.

With a small spade in his hand to remove stones and thorns from the precincts of the temple, Appar went from one sacred place to another singing the praises of the Lord. Though his songs directly and indirectly reflect his spiritual wisdom, Appar never claimed any wisdom. He considered himself a humble devotee of the Lord. One of his verses runs thus:

The wise ones worship You in their wisdom,
I am incapable of worshipping You in wisdom,
Seeing the wise ones worship You in wisdom,
Oh, Wise One, I also join the worship.

But Appar's life is a supreme example of practical spiritual wisdom. He set himself to do manual work in the service of his Lord, by clearing the path for worshippers. But his mind and spirit were wholly given over to contemplation of the Lord. Like the saint who said he could pray with his pots and pans, Appar could pray with his spade and shovel and practise the presence of the Lord. He prayed to the Lord to purify his body by placing the marks of the sacred bull and the trident on his arms. The Lord granted this prayer.

Appar went from one sacred place to another. Chidambaram was one of the places he visited. When he went to Sirkali, he met Tirujnanasambandhar, the boy-saint, and was affectionately addressed by him as 'Appar.' Appar prayed to the Lord to place His Feet on his head. This prayer was also granted.

There was a pious person by name Appudi Adigal in Tingalur. He had heard of the greatness of Appar and was so drawn to him that he called his son and every possession of his by the name Tirunavukkarasu (a name given to Appar by the Lord, as we saw earlier). When Appar went to Tingalur, Appudi Adigal was overjoyed to see in person one whose very name was sacred to him. Arrangements were made for a feast. Appudi Adigal's son who went into the garden to get a plantain leaf was bitten by a snake. He rushed back, gave the plantain leaf to his parents and collapsed. The parents were worried that this mishap might prevent Appar from taking his meal and so did not inform Appar about it. By the Lord's grace, Appar found out what had happened, prayed to the Lord to restore the dead child to life. The Lord was pleased to do so.

In the course of his pilgrimage he met Tirujnanasambandhar again and also three other saints, Siruttondar, Tirunilanakkar and Muruga Nayanar. All of them stayed together for some days. Then Appar and Tirujnanasambandhar started out together. It was a time of famine in the neighbourhood of the Cauvery delta. The saints prayed to the Lord for relief to the starving people. The Lord was pleased to give each of them every day a gold coin with which they were able to buy provisions for the starving people.

At Maraikkadu, the main doors of the temple were closed by the Vedas. Appar prayed to the Lord to have the doors opened. When the doors were opened, the saints went in and worshipped. On coming out, Sambandhar prayed to the Lord to close the doors again. The doors were closed again.

There was a difference in these occurrences. Appar had to sing for a long time before the Lord answered his prayer whereas Sambandhar's prayer was answered almost immediately. Appar was filled with sorrow that he was unable to understand the Lord's will. As he slept that night, the Lord appeared in his dream and asked him to go to Tiruvaymur. Appar went there but was not able to see the Lord. Meanwhile, Sambandhar also joined him. Appar prayed to the Lord to reveal Himself at least to his son (Tirujnanasambandhar's life, we saw earlier, exemplifies the parent-child relationship with God). The Lord revealed Himself to Sambandhar who showed Him to Appar.

Messengers arrived from the Queen of the Pandiyan king and his chief minister to request Tirujnanasambandhar to go to Madurai to restore Saivism. The Pandiyan king had come under the influence of the Jainas and had embraced Jainism. Appar was unwilling to let Sambandhar go, fearing persecution by the Jainas and, offered to go himself. Appar tried to dissuade him saying that the planets etc. were inauspicious for travel. Sambandhar sang a number of verses whose central theme is that if the Lord is pleased to abide with us, nothing could go wrong with us. Planets, so-called inauspicious days, wild animals, malevolent spirits—all these would be good to those in whose heart the Lord is pleased to reside. The message, in brief, is 'If you make your heart the dwelling place of the Lord, you can "shake the yoke of inauspicious stars."' Perhaps it was Appar's desire to tell the world through the boy-saint who spoke as one with the authority of his divine Father, that where the Lord reigns, there everything would be auspicious.

As Appar resumed his pilgrimage, one day he was overcome by hunger and fatigue. Unmindful of these, he was continuing his journey. The Lord was pleased to appear in human form, give him food and water and a cool place to rest in for some time. When Appar resumed his journey, the Lord went with him and disappeared as the saint drew near a shrine. Appar realised that it was the Lord who was pleased to appear before him and give him all help.

Visiting several sacred places, the saint went to Kalahasti, a place with which the name of Kannappar is associated. Kalahasti is called Southern Kailas. This roused the desire of Appar to visit Kailas in the north. This was an arduous journey. Appar was badly bruised in body and limb by the obstacles on his way. The flesh was failing but the spirit knew no fatigue and would not admit failure. As the saint was urging his broken and bruised body along the road to Kailas, he reached a condition of physical immobility. The Lord appeared in the form of an ascetic and told him that he should give up this humanly impossible quest. But the saint said that he would not return without seeing Kailas. Pleased with his determination, the Lord disappeared. Speaking from the skies, the Lord asked him to get up. The saint got up, whole in body and limb. The Lord said that if the saint bathed in the tank nearby, he would reach Tiruvaiyaru in the South where he would see Him exactly as He was in Kailas. The saint obeyed the Lord, stepped into the tank and reappeared in Tiruvaiyaru. In Kailas, the Lord abides with His consort. What was the sight that greeted Appar in Tiruvaiyaru? Every living being, to whatever species it belonged, appeared with its mate before the saint. This vision faded after a while. This was a revelation of divinity in all living beings. To the spiritual eye, the male and female of every species of living beings appeared as the Lord and His consort. By the Lord's grace, the saint understood this as the real significance of Kailas.

When Appar was staying in Tiruppunduruti, Sambandhar returned from Madurai after re-establishing Saivism in the King's Court as well as among the people. He came in his palanquin to see Appar. Unobserved by others, Appar joined the palanquin-bearers. Sambandhar was surprised to find Appar among his palanquin-bearers and was deeply touched by the aged saint's humility. Appar was very happy to hear about the restoration of Saivism in Madurai. He went to Madurai and other sacred places in the South upto Rameswaram and returned to Tiruppugalur.

All his life, Appar had been an ascetic. He did not go the way of all flesh. He cared not for worldly riches. But was he well-poised in spirit? As the saint was plying his spade to remove stones and thorns, the Lord caused precious stones to appear among them. The *Periya Puranam* says that the saints treat gold and potsherd as alike matter. Appar exemplified this attitude. He threw away the precious stones along with the ordinary ones.

Now came a more irresistible temptation. Celestial damsels appeared before him and tried to distract his mind with their seductive charms. The saint spurned them as so many forms of delusion. They went away unable to divert his attention from contemplation of the Lord. What he preached to humanity, he practised to perfection. "Attune your minds to contemplation of the Lord. No harm will befall you," he said. In the face of temptations also, he displayed this attunement of the mind.

The saint had lived a long life—a life of intense search for Truth, a life of great suffering by persecution—but a life of great joy when he had discovered the Truth in his own ancestral faith. He now prayed for departure from this world so that he could be always in the presence of the Lord. The Lord was pleased to take him back to Himself.

The songs of Appar have a moving quality about them. Though based on intense spiritual experience of an exalted kind, they touch a sympathetic chord in the hearts of common people also.

Perhaps, it is because the saint identifies himself with the common people that we feel a kinship of spirit with him. He is master of a special form of long verse. Yet, other verses of his, shorter in form, also are gems of their kind. All his verses have an authoritativeness about them. Here is one which combines profundity of thought with brevity of expression.

> **Like fire (hidden) in fuel, like butter in good milk,**
> **Stands concealed He Who is like the effulgence of a (precious) stone;**
> **With love as churning rod and wisdom as the rope,**
> **As we vigorously churn forth, He stands revealed.**

The significance of this verse is thus pointed out: The three grades of human beings, the dull, the buoyant and the wise (*tamasik, rajasik* and *sattvik* types) are comparable to fuel, milk and unpolished precious stone respectively. Only with long and vigorous effort can fire be churned out of fuel; with vigorous effort, butter churned out of milk; and with slight effort in polishing, brightness brought forth from the precious stone. Even so are the efforts to manifest divinity in the three grades of souls. What are the instruments which help us to manifest our innate divinity? A loving heart and an enlightened understanding!

Devotion is of two types, one where there is some measure of human effort and another where there is utter self-surrender. These are usually compared to the way of the young one of a monkey and the way of the young one of a cat. The former's safety lies in clinging to its mother; the latter's, in its utter surrender to its mother. Appar gives two other parallels for these two types. They are the ladder and the boat respectively. The ladder helps us to go from a low to a high level. But we have got to do the climbing. The boat, on the other hand, carries us from one shore to another, without any effort on our part.

Human birth is frequently spoken of as an evil. This is because the high purpose of human birth is forgotten among the temptations of worldly life. But, says the saint, "If it enables us to see the sweet-smiling face of the Lord, even human birth is to be welcomed indeed!" He calls upon men to realise the value of human birth with opportunities for worship of the Lord it makes possible. Human birth enables us to become servants of the Lord. Yes, to the devotee, service to the Lord is perfect freedom. Why human life? Even the life of a worm is to be welcomed, *if* the Lord is pleased to abide with it.

Appar thinks of the commonfolk whose faith requires help in distress. Identifying himself with them, he sings, "People like me will not believe in your existence, if devotees are left helpless in distress." But his own faith is not a fair-weather one. It could withstand any storm, physical or spiritual.

What if the sky falls,
The earth quakes,
The mountain turns upside down,
The swelling sea dries up,
And the Sun comes down,
To one who has attained the perfect Lord!

What a message of hope and courage to mankind! Surrender yourself to the Lord. Neither global nor even cosmic catastrophe can have any terrors for you!

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

In this book are presented short accounts of the lives and teachings of some of the prophets, seers and thinkers of the world who appeared at various times to guide mankind in the adventure of the Spirit. They are drawn from all countries and through all times. Each of them was a Master Mind of uncommon rate who brought a new vision to bear on the problems of life, revolutionised the thoughts and actions of their contemporaries and blazed a new trail for posterity. Individually and collectively, they are standing witnesses to the eternal glory of God and to the greatness of man who is only an abridgement of the Divine. Some of these like Zarathustra, Christ, the Buddha and Mahavira were founders of new religions, while others like Sankara, Desika, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda gave fresh life to old faiths. Chhatrapati Shivaji established a Dharma Rajya recalling the Rama Rajya of other times. The intellectuals who thought in a great way are represented by Socrates and Emerson while Mrs. Annie Besant and Sarojini Devi are outstanding women whose noble lives must be an inspiration for ever.

The contributors to this and to its companion volumes have written with the authority of their scholarship and with discernment and sympathy. It is hoped that marching with their pageant, the reader will be inclined to a more intimate study of these great lives.